

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Friday, October 21, 2011

Morocco Wins Vote for Seat on UN Security Council—Recognized for Role in Arab Spring Reforms, UN Peacekeeping, & Confronting Security Risks to Region

Washington, DC (Oct. 21)—The United Nations' 193 member nations voted in New York City today to approve Morocco's bid to serve as one of five new non-permanent members on the UN Security Council in 2012-2013. Morocco received 151 votes from the UN's members in the first round of voting, well over the two-thirds required, and will join the 15-member UN Security Council in January.

As the uncertain outcomes of Arab Spring change continue to reshape North Africa and the Middle East, Morocco has been recognized for its leadership in supporting peaceful democratic reforms in the region, both before and during the Arab Spring, and for confronting the rising threat of terrorism and extremism. Morocco has also been an important ally for UN peacekeeping efforts, and played a key role in mobilizing Arab and international support for the UN-backed effort in Libya that led to the downfall of the Qaddafi regime.

"Morocco is joining the UN Security Council at a time of great challenge," said Robert Holley, executive director of the Moroccan American Center for Policy. "But it can also be a time of great opportunity if world leaders act. Morocco has shown it has a model of reform that can meet its people's aspirations for peaceful change, and also address international concerns for security and stability. What the Maghreb needs now is to end longstanding differences in the interest of greater cooperation and unity in North Africa."

"Morocco understands the importance of democratic reforms for winning the fight against extremism and terrorism," said Yonah Alexander, director, International Center of Terrorism Studies, Potomac Institute of Policy Studies. "Nowhere is this more critical than in North Africa and the Middle East, where reformers and extremists are in a life-and-death struggle. Terrorist attacks have risen more than 500% in North Africa and the Sahel since 9/11. The recent influx of Libyan arms smuggled into the Sahel, the base for *al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb*, is a great concern. Col. Qaddafi may be gone, but his weapons are a threat to the stability of the entire region."

Announcing Morocco's candidacy at the UN last month, Foreign Minister Taieb Fassi Fihri said the North Africa nation is committed to reinforcing its "partnership for peace" with the UN, and would focus on reducing arms stockpiles, non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and enhancing solidarity with developing nations in South-South cooperation.

Sec. of State Hillary Clinton reiterated US backing for Morocco after its July 1 Constitutional referendum. "During this time of profound change in the Middle East and North Africa," she said, the US appreciates and supports Morocco's "efforts to strengthen the rule of law, human rights and good governance." Meeting in March with Foreign Minister Fassi Fihri, she called Morocco "a model for others in the region." The two leaders announced a new "strategic dialogue" to deepen bilateral relations and address regional development and security.

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The Moroccan American Center for Policy (MACP) is a non-profit organization whose principal mission is to inform opinion makers, government officials and interested publics in the United States about political and social developments in Morocco and the role being played by the Kingdom of Morocco in broader strategic developments in North Africa, the Mediterranean, and the Middle East. For more, please visit www.moroccanamericanpolicy.org.

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2011-10-21 11:28

News Briefing:

Update on key developments, expert comments on North Africa & the Sahel October 2011

Al-Qaeda kidnaps Westerners from Polisario refugee camp, reportedly with help of Polisario insiders

AQIM reaches out from new terror hotspot in Sahel, aided by Polisario, other militants, Qaddafi arms

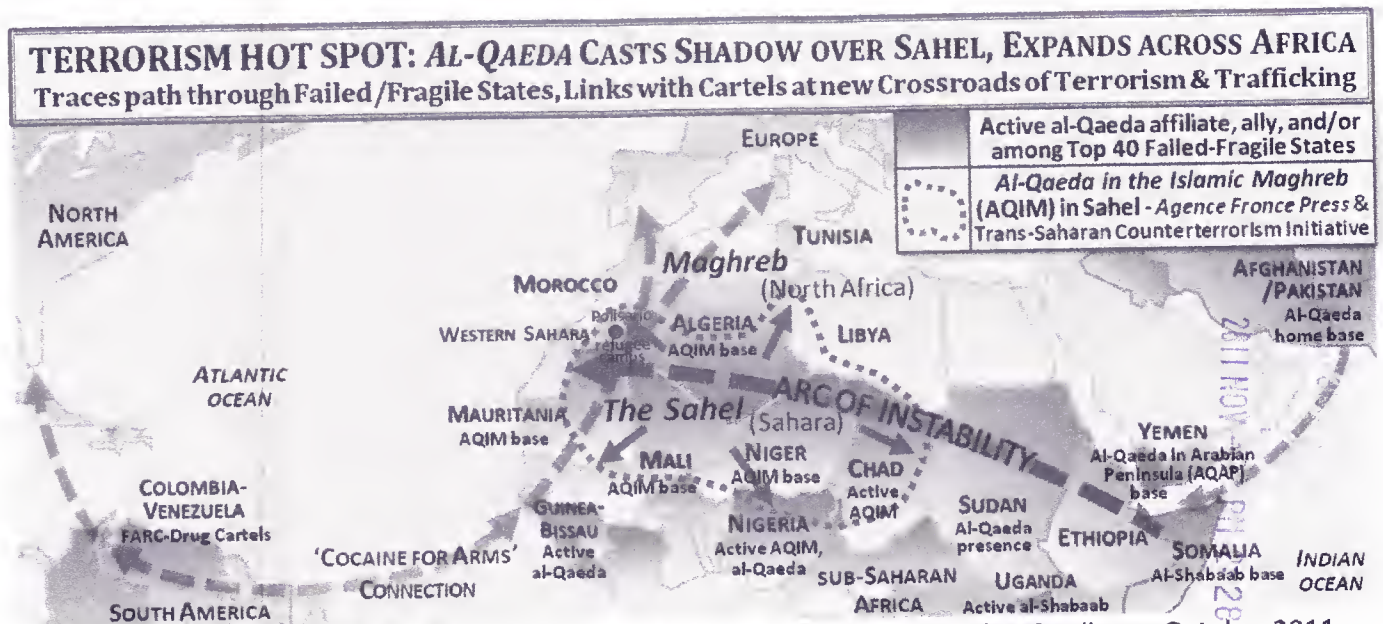
Washington, DC (Oct. 31, 2011)—On Oct. 23, *al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb* (AQIM) kidnapped one Italian and two Spanish aid workers from *Polisario*-run refugee camps in Algeria. The abduction was reportedly assisted by *Polisario Front* members in the camps near Tindouf, Algeria, who supplied the insurgents weapons and directions to the victims, now being held as hostages at an undisclosed location. The attack is AQIM's latest advance in Africa's Sahel region, where rising terrorism and a flood of Libyan arms have created what AFRICOM's Head, US Gen. Carter Ham, recently called a "threat to the US" and potentially "very, very dangerous outcome." Since 9/11, attacks by AQIM and other terrorist groups in the Maghreb and Sahel are up more than 500%, according to the ICTS.

- **AFP reports: 'Less than ten unarmed AQIM militants entered the Sahrawi refugee camp in Tindouf, western Algeria where sympathizers of the Polisario Front gave them weapons & helped them seek out the hostages.'** AQIM ties to *Polisario* members are well-established. Mauritania court records show AQIM paid *Polisario* veterans to kidnap Spanish aid workers. Mali & Mauritania have arrested *Polisario* militia in AQIM-linked drug-smuggling. This insider-aided abduction is AQIM's first attack at the *Polisario* base in Algeria, a reputed AQIM recruiting ground.

Agence France Press, CBS News/Globol Post, Associated Press, Woshington Post, Foreign Policy/Middle East Chonnel, World Tribune, The Hill

- **Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) is serious transnational terror threat, aided by Libyan arms influx and links to separatist Polisario members and other militants, mercenaries, and traffickers in the Sahel.** France declared AQIM its #1 security threat, after a series of high-profile attacks, foreign national kidnappings, and brutal hostage beheading. Reports now confirm AQIM may have obtained Libyan arms from Qaddafi loyalists, including surface-to-air missiles, and is expanding its ties to *Polisario* and other militants in the region.

CBS News/Globol Post, Middle East Online, TIME Magazine, Voice of America, ABC News, New York Times, FOX News, CSIS, The Hill



ICTS — International Center for Terrorism Studies, at Potomac Institute for Policy Studies — October 2011

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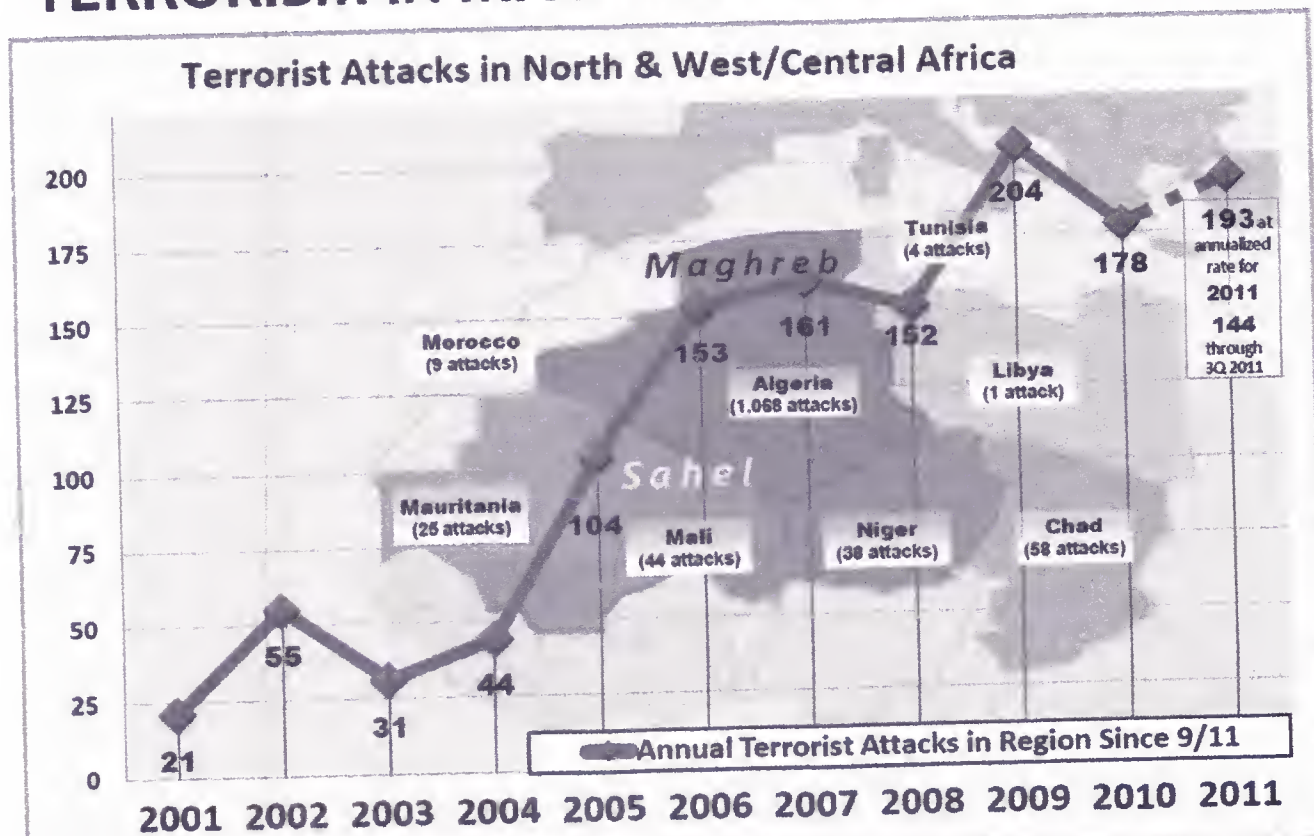
Expert Comments on aid-worker abduction, al-Qaeda, Polisario, & Sahel in recent news/journal reports

- ▶ **"Less than ten unarmed AQIM militants entered the Sahrawi refugee camp in Tindouf, western Algeria, where sympathisers of the Polisario Front gave them weapons and helped them seek out the hostages."**
 - Mediator for AQIM, announcing that hostages are alive and demands for release will come later
"Three Qaeda hostages seized last week alive: mediator," AGENCY FRANCE PRESS (AFP), 10-30-11
http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5gfskPTtqBS_IQzBQK_R-Fdi_-z0A?docId=CNG.fb5674e8c48dbb7ef3f59c256d4c3f07.531
- ▶ **"The European hostages are prisoners of AQIM and its Sahrawi wing." The kidnappers were linked to a Sahrawi member of AQIM named Hakim Ould Mohamed M'Barek, who in 2008 admitted the existence of "an AQIM network of indoctrination and recruitment" inside the Sahrawi refugee camps in Tindouf, western Algeria.**
 - Mali security sources, speaking to Agence France Press
"Italian, Spanish hostages taken by Qaeda's 'Sahrawi wing'," AGENCY FRANCE PRESS (AFP), 10-23-11
<http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5Uz8dShyvB92PQ9paliU96pLF6xw?docId=CNG.431f8929bb859203a81e4e74eac5df3c.4c1>
- ▶ **"To cross the checkpoints of the Algerian army and Polisario, kidnappers benefited from support of Polisario's military."**
 - El Pais, Spain's most widely read daily newspaper
"Kidnappers of three European aid workers benefited from polisario security apparatus' support: Spanish paper says," MOROCCO WORLD NEWS, 10-26-11
<http://moroccoworldnews.com/2011/10/kidnappers-of-three-european-aid-workers-benefited-from-polisario-security-apparatus-support-spanish-paper-says/>
- ▶ **"Whenever you have a pool of young men with nothing else to do and poor prospects, you have a heightened risk—all the more so when the young men in question have had military training as those in the Polisario camps have."** AQIM did use a former Polisario militant to kidnap Spanish aid workers in 2009.
 - Dr. J. Peter Pham, Atlantic Council, director of the Africa center
"Morocco's problem: Freelance jihads, not al-Qaida," CBS NEWS/ASSOCIATED PRESS, Paul Schemm, 10-16-11
<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2011/10/15/ap/middleeast/main20120959.shtml>
- ▶ **"Shabab, AQIM, Boko Haram are 'each individually of concern. But what really concerns me is at least a stated intent for those organizations to link and synchronize their efforts. That to me would be a very, very dangerous outcome for us.'"**
 - US General Carter Ham, who heads the Africa command, speaking recently in Washington, DC
"Al-Qaeda could be looking for new sanctuaries in troubled African states," MIDDLE EAST ONLINE, Michel Moutot, 10-30-11
<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=48788>
- ▶ **"Al-Qaeda traditionally has taken advantage of areas that are wracked by conflict, turmoil and lack of government. It is a safe haven they seek to launch attacks."**
 - John Brennan, US President Barack Obama's top anti-terrorism official.
"Al-Qaeda could be looking for new sanctuaries in troubled African states," MIDDLE EAST ONLINE, Michel Moutot, 10-30-11
<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=48788>
- ▶ **"U.S. and European officials also worry that AQIM—an al-Qaida group that operates in the west and north of Africa—is working to establish links with Boko Haram and al-Shabab, the Somali insurgent group. "Security threats emanating from Africa are being taken more seriously than they have before, and they're more real."**
 - Jennifer Cooke, Center for Strategic and International Studies, director of the Africa program.
"Somalia, Libya, Uganda: US military increases focus on militant threats from Africa," WASHINGTON POST/AP, 10-27-11
http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/from-western-to-eastern-africa-us-military-increases-focus-on-militant-threats/2011/10/27/gIQA5siYMM_print.html
- ▶ **"We have asked the United Nations to send a mission to Algeria to assess the security situation in the camps of Tindouf."**
 - Spanish Foreign Minister Trinidad Jimenez, after talks in Rabat with Morocco Foreign Minister Taieb Fassi Fihri.
"Has Spain switched gear on the Western Sahara conflict?," AL ARABIYA, 10-25-11
<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/10/25/173691.html>
- ▶ **"The risk is greater today because of AQIM's ties with other regional terror groups, like Somali al-Shabab movement. AQIM's expansion is a cause of concern for all of us. Without real regional co-operation between the various countries in the region, of which there are many, and the western nations, we shall never overcome terrorism."**
 - Morocco Foreign Minister Taieb Fassi Fihri, at a joint briefing with Spanish Foreign Minister Trinidad Jimenez
"Morocco, Spain discuss anti-terror fight," MAGHAREBIA, Siham Ali, 10-28-11
http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2011/10/27/feature-01
- ▶ **"Polisario is intensifying activities to transport and smuggle a range of illegal drugs in both North Africa and Europe. The Polisario is working with Al Qaida in both the drug and weapons trade. This poses a serious threat to the Maghreb."**
 - Prof. Yonah Alexander, Director, International Center for Terrorism Studies, Potomac Institute of Policy Studies
"Report: Polisario working with Al Qaida in drug, weapons trafficking," WORLD TRIBUNE, 9-20-11
http://www.worldtribune.com/worldtribune/WTARC/2011/ss_terror1178_09_20.asp

Expert Comments: More on aid-worker abduction, al-Qaeda, Polisario, & Sahel in recent news/journal reports

- ▶ **"Libyan weapons have been acquired by members of the terrorist group al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). An AQIM attack on a Mauritanian garrison in July included surface-to-air missiles that could only have come from Libya."**
 - Mauritanian President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, in an interview with French television
 - "Gadhafi Collapse Raises Concerns Over Arms for Africa al-Qaida,"** VOICE OF AMERICA, Scott Stearns, 9-29-11
<http://www.voanews.com/english/news/-Gadhafi-Collapse-Raises-Concerns-Over-Arms-For-Africa-al-Qaida-130788458.html>
- ▶ **"With a gigantic cache of advanced anti-aircraft rockets missing from a raided storage space in Tripoli this week, concerns rose that the Gaddafi regime's weapons had been smuggled into neighboring Niger, Mali or Mauritania by al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. "AQIM is flush with ransom money, and they're the most likely to buy them."**
 - Nasser Weddady, the civil rights outreach director at the American Islamic Congress who focuses on Mauritania.
 - "North Africa's Sahel: The Next Terrorism Hot Spot?,"** TIME MAGAZINE, Karen Leigh, 9-12-11
<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2092687,00.html>
- ▶ **"Analysts worry these unemployed guns-for-hire will become a ready pool of recruits for AQIM which has boasted its coffers with ransom money and has in the past outsourced abductions to other mercenary armed groups in the desert."**
 - Tristan McConnell, senior correspondent for Global Post, also East Africa Correspondent, The Times of London
 - "Post-Qaddafi West and Central Africa a 'powder keg',"** CBS NEWS/GLOBAL POST, Tristan McConnell, 9-11-11
http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-503543_162-20104517-503543.html
- ▶ **"This is something that the intelligence services are following very closely... It seems that some members of Boko Haram and Al Shabaab were trained by AQIM."**
 - Gilles de Kerchove, European Union counterterrorism coordinator, September security conference in Algiers.
 - "Post-Qaddafi West and Central Africa a 'powder keg',"** CBS NEWS/GLOBAL POST, Tristan McConnell, 9-11-11
http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-503543_162-20104517-503543.html
- ▶ **"Thousands of shoulder-launched heat-seeking missiles were found to have disappeared from looted warehouses in Tripoli this week. "If these fall into the wrong hands they could turn all of North Africa into a no-fly zone"**
 - Peter Bouckaert, Human Rights Watch, told media after discovering the missing munitions in Libya.
 - "Post-Qaddafi West and Central Africa a 'powder keg',"** CBS NEWS/GLOBAL POST, Tristan McConnell, 9-11-11
http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-503543_162-20104517-503543.html
- ▶ **"Intelligence reports confirm that large amounts of Qaddafi's arms are swamping the area. Turning a blind eye to this dangerous situation is not an option. Growing numbers of AQIM operatives and well-armed mercenaries are the new mujahedeen, transforming the Sahel into a trans-African superhighway of terrorism and trafficking."**
 - Ambassador Edward M. Gabriel, former US Ambassador to Morocco
 - "Peace or a 'powder keg' in North Africa,"** THE HILL, Commentary by Edward Gabriel, 10-3-11
<http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/foreign-policy/185089-peace-or-a-powder-keg-in-north-africa>
- ▶ **"When the Libyan uprising began, several international news reports claimed that the Front—with secret support from Algeria—sent mercenaries to fight alongside Gaddafi's forces. Polisario denies the allegations, though Libyan rebels recently uncovered documents at the Algerian Consulate in Tripoli allegedly confirming Polisario's involvement."**
 - Imad Estito, correspondent for Al Akhbar
 - "Polisario after Gaddafi: The Price of Patronage,"** AL AKHBAR, Imad Estito, 9-2-11
<http://english.al-akhbar.com/content/polisario-after-gaddafi-price-patronage>
- ▶ **"The status quo in North Africa is untenable... the Moroccan monarchy is the only regime to have initiated meaningful... economic & social change. It is also the only one which enjoys relatively wide popular support."**
 - Anouar Boukhars, Former Visiting Fellow, Brookings Doha Center — The Brookings Institution
 - "Tunisia's Political Earthquake,"** BROOKINGS INSTITUTION, Anouar Boukhars, 1-20-11
http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2011/0120_tunisia_boukhars.aspx
- ▶ **"It now seems there is ample evidence that the Polisario Front... is in league with al-Qaeda."**
 - Jennifer Rubin, columnist, Washington Post, citing recent news and reports from the region
 - "Morocco: A Different Kind of Muslim Country,"** WASHINGTON POST, Jennifer Rubin, 1-12-11
<http://voices.washingtonpost.com/right-turn/2011/01/morocco-a-different-kind-of-muslim-country.html>
- ▶ **"Conditions are dismal for Saharans living in Polisario camps, "a breeding-ground for potential future AQIM recruits."**
 - Michael Braun, former U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency chief of operations and intelligence,
 - "Unlikely bedfellows: Are some Saharan Marxists joining Al-Qaida in N. Africa?,"** FP/MIDDLE EAST CHANNEL, 1-3-11
http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/01/03/unlikely_bedfellows_are_some_saharan_marxists_joining_al_qaida_operations_in_north

TEN YEARS LATER: RISING INCIDENCE OF TERRORISM IN MAGHREB & SAHEL SINCE 9/11



In the ten years since Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks by *al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb* (AQIM) and other militant extremists in the Maghreb and Sahel have increased more than 500% from their low in the period to hit a high of 204 attacks in 2009. In 2011, the number of terrorist remains dangerously high, and is on a pace through the third quarter to reach 193 attacks for the year. Over the past decade, 1,247 terrorist bombings, murders, kidnappings, and ambushes—against international and domestic targets—claimed more than 2,000 lives and 6,000 victims in Algeria, Chad, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, and Tunisia.

Last year, intelligence reports and arrests confirmed AQIM has opened links with Latin cartels for 'drugs-for-arms' smuggling to Europe through terrorist-trafficking networks in the Sahel that include members of the Polisario Front. Recently, intelligence reports from officials in the region confirm that a variety of arms from the Libya conflict, including surface-to-air missiles, may have fallen into AQIM hands in the Sahel.

Data Table: Terrorism Incidents in Maghreb & Sahel since Sept. 11, 2001

TIMELINE	YEAR	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011 thru 9/30
NORTH & WEST/CENTRAL AFRICA NATIONS	Totals:	21 attacks	55 attacks	31 attacks	44 attacks	104 attacks	153 attacks	161 attacks	152 attacks	204 attacks	178 attacks	144 attacks
	1,247 attacks											
ALGERIA	1,068 attacks	20	54	28	39	93	120	110	121	185	168	130
CHAD	58 attacks				3	6	28	14	6		1	
LIBYA	1 attack						1					
MALI	44 attacks			1	1	2	3	10	11	9	4	3
MAURITANIA	25 attacks				1	3		4	4	6	2	5
MOROCCO	9 attacks			2				5				
NIGER	38 attacks						1	18	9	4	3	3
TUNISIA	4 attacks	1	1						1			1

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THE AMBASSADORS REVIEW / FALL - 2011

Will Morocco's Reforms Point a Way Forward or Simply Succeed Alone?

Edward M. Gabriel, United States Ambassador to the Kingdom of Morocco 1997-2001

Robert M. Holley, United States Foreign Service Officer (Ret.)

Disclaimer: The authors currently advise the Kingdom of Morocco. The remarks expressed in this article are the authors' own views.

Having both served in Morocco as representatives of the United States under President Clinton, and for the past ten years as advisers to the Kingdom of Morocco, we have witnessed firsthand the remarkable record of political and social transformation that Morocco has undergone over the past twenty years, and particularly since King Mohammed VI assumed the throne twelve years ago. In thinking about recent events in Morocco, particularly the adoption of the new constitution proposed by King Mohammed VI, it is almost impossible to grasp the potential importance of these developments without placing them in the context of events in the larger Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

The initial euphoria over the tumultuous events in the Arab world has given way to a more sober and, for many expert commentators, realistic assessment of just what the future may hold beyond new uncertainties. The split between democratic reformers and Islamic fundamentalists in Egypt grows more evident each day. Any new parliamentary election will witness a jostling among fractious moderates and conservatives whose platforms will still be subject to continued negotiations with the military.

Reform in Tunisia is moving ahead in fits and starts, again with uncertainty over the outcomes of the elections and further constitutional reforms. A stubborn Qaddafi regime in Libya has managed to survive the protestations of the United States and others of its opposition, and NATO, without strong US political and military leadership, seems unable to advance its mission. What a failure in the Libya mission might mean for the future of the North Atlantic alliance raises another set of troubling uncertainties itself.

Bashar al-Assad's regime continues its hardline response against the Syrian opposition as well as its onerous meddling in the affairs of its neighbors. Western criticism and threats of targeted sanctions take their toll on the Syrian people without effectively weakening the regime. Violence continues in Yemen where, as with their affiliates in North Africa, only the local branch of al-Qaeda seems to be gaining ground as the conflict stretches on. In Bahrain, the military backing of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has kept the lid on for now, but sectarian troubles continue to simmer near the boiling point. And the regime in Tehran reportedly seeks to take advantage of these circumstances to further weaken its historic competitors in the region.

With oil prices rising, US media coverage of the Middle East barely focuses on key issues other than the Arab Spring, such as the dynamics between Israel and the Palestinians, Iran's nuclear ambitions, and how the United States can extricate itself from Iraq without serious sectarian violence that would further enhance Iranian influence. Of course, none of these issues has gone away and each has arguably become more serious than before given the new uncertainties of the region.

In the midst of this challenging environment but less noticed among Washington policymakers, is an opportunity for embattled Middle East policymakers to discover some fresh inspiration for the future of reforms in the MENA region. In Morocco, King Mohammed VI seized the opening provided by popular calls for reform to advance a thorough revision of the constitution and a call for new elections that will bring to office a new and significantly more empowered set of legislative and executive officials and establish an independent judiciary. The new constitution, approved on July 1, 2011, by an overwhelming turnout of more than 73 percent of Moroccan voters, included the following provisions:

The Head of Government will be chosen from the party with the largest number of seats in parliament.

The Head of Government will appoint Ministers and senior government officials.

Morocco will be a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system of government based on sovereignty vested in the people as citizens.

Government institutions will ensure the freedoms of citizens through good governance, human rights, and other basic inalienable rights of the people.

A fully independent human rights organization with the power to investigate any alleged violations of law abridging human rights will be established.

An independent judiciary will guarantee freedom from illegal searches or detention, privacy for communications and the right to a trial and a lawyer for anyone arrested.

Substantial power will be transferred from the central government to elected local and regional officials, who will be more directly accountable to citizens.

All citizens will be treated equally regardless of sex, origin, language, religion, or creed, with women treated equally with men.

The primacy of international over domestic law through any treaty obligations accepted by Morocco will be observed.

Amazigh (Berber) will be recognized as an official language of Morocco along with Arabic.

The diversity of Moroccan society, with specific reference to, among others, the Jewish culture and population—surely unique in any Arab constitution—will be recognized.

Mechanisms will be established to ensure oversight and accountability in the exercise of power in public office.

Some argue that the value of these reforms can only be judged by their implementation. While there is merit in this commentary, it implicitly diminishes the substantial record of previous reforms enacted in Morocco over the last twenty years, and most especially over the last twelve.

In his first major address to the people of Morocco on August 20, 1999, King Mohammed VI outlined his first priority—equal rights for women—in what was to become a series of social and political reforms that defined his vision for the future of the nation. In our view, the new constitution and Morocco's credibility as a nation committed to democratic values that we Americans also embrace, should also be judged and supported in view of the reforms already adopted. These reforms include:

Women's Rights: Women's rights are hardly a popular cause anywhere else in the region, but in Morocco this resulted in a full reform of the family code that granted unprecedented rights to women.

Equity and Reconciliation Commission: This commission is the first and, so far, the only public commission of inquiry in the Arab world into the nation's past human rights abuses. Heading this Equity and Reconciliation Commission is a group of former political prisoners. The commission held public town hall meetings and broadcast its hearings over public television. The State admitted its culpability and victims have been compensated.

A Coalition Government of Two Major Opposition Political Movements: We came to Morocco right after the 1997 election, which resulted in a coalition government of the two major opposition political movements, some of whose most senior leaders had been exiled and under sentence of death.

Elections Certified as "Free and Fair": Subsequently, there have been two sets of national and local elections certified by international observers, including European and American, as "free and fair."

Reforms to Ameliorate Poverty and Improve Socio-Economic Equality: King Mohammed VI has made it a priority to tackle the issues of poverty and socio-economic equality. The National Initiative for Human Development (INDH) launched in 2005 provided substantial funding for more than 600 of the nation's poorest rural and urban communities to support public/private partnerships for sustainable economic growth. The social housing project is a special program designed to augment public housing and eliminate shanty-towns in the nation by 2015. Both programs have produced excellent results thus far.

The above reforms and others have qualified Morocco for a Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) compact with the US government, the first criterion of which is a proven track record on "good governance" issues and a demonstrable commitment to improving the daily lives of the nation's most disadvantaged citizens.

Our overall point here is that the Moroccan exception is not a recent response to issues raised in the wake of the Arab Spring, but a thoughtful evolutionary process begun more than a decade ago. That is why it is real, why it will continue to advance further, and why it has become a model for the region.

In our view, Morocco's record on these issues—and the seriousness of the constitutional revisions—argue for a fuller public embrace and robust set of supportive measures than the State Department has yet to put into place. We believe it also justifies a stronger initiative from Washington to partner with Morocco in order to take advantage of Morocco's deeper understanding of the region and proven experience on how best to advance reforms in a conservative region where many remain resistant to such changes, especially if led by Western powers.

Obama administration programs, such as the US-North Africa Partnership for Economic Opportunity (NAPEO), foster private-public sector initiatives and intra-regional partnerships among entrepreneurs and companies. Similarly, the Deauville Partnership will help ensure economic stability that helps create jobs and rewards transparency. These are examples of targeted strategic assistance that can facilitate and underpin continued progress.

In addition, it is in America's interests to help Morocco ensure that its vision for the future succeeds. The region needs both a local champion and a local success to help sustain the democratic vision that we all hope will become ascendant, rather than the regressive one we fear is gaining ground. This requires more than timid statements of encouragement couched in language that also implies some skepticism about Morocco's intentions. Morocco is our oldest treaty ally, the first nation to recognize the independence of the United States in 1777, and has a record of

commitment to the good governance that we hope will take hold elsewhere in the region. As such, Morocco deserves stronger support—in statements, policies and aid—from the United States based on its performance and long history of close relations; it is clearly in our interest to provide this three-pronged support without hesitation as it would benefit both Morocco and the region. So where should we begin? Perhaps the most important element of the latest reforms, which would also have the greatest long-term impact on strengthening democratic systems, is the determination to transfer governing responsibilities from representatives of the central state to local elected officials. "Regionalization" is the term most often used in Morocco to place decision-making authority in the hands of officials locally elected, more directly accountable to citizens, and to civil society organizations, which should expedite the implementation of the new constitution. This grassroots approach would take on the great challenge of building the human and structural capacity at the local level to exercise these responsibilities with competence and transparency. This project of capacity building at the local level is where the United States can put its own substantial expertise to work with its Moroccan partners. If such an effort were begun in the southern region of Morocco, commonly referred to as the Western Sahara, it would have the added benefit of bringing greater autonomy to the local government there, something the United States has already endorsed as its policy to settle the Western Sahara dispute. The events of the Arab Spring have once again reminded us that the Middle East and North Africa are still significant players in the global community. Whether one looks at the economics of oil and markets for investments or the political instability and challenges to security, no region merits more attention at this time. The King and people of Morocco have made a definite choice to invest in their future—to answer the need for greater economic growth, jobs, transparency, and power-sharing by undertaking a thorough revision of how the country is governed and to foster opportunities to remedy disadvantages within Moroccan society. Without oil and gas, and with limited resources, Morocco's efforts need to be matched by its friends in the international community. American know-how and global insights can be both an incentive and a support that can propel Morocco along its chosen path to becoming a more responsive, reliable, and progressive country. It is an investment worth making in a cherished and responsible ally in these times of great change.

This material is distributed by the Moroccan American Center for Policy on behalf of the Government of Morocco. Additional information is available at the Department of Justice in Washington, DC.

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Saturday, November 26, 2011

Morocco Votes for New Parliament in First Election Since New Constitution; Turnout Up More Than 20 percent

PJD takes lead in seats; US, UK, France, Others Praise Vote as 'Important Milestone' for Peaceful Change in Region

Washington, DC (Nov. 26) — Moroccans voted yesterday in the country's first Parliamentary election since recent Constitutional reforms that increased the power of Morocco's Parliament. Voters chose from among 5,873 candidates and 33 different parties to fill 395 seats. Seventy seats were set aside for younger adult and women members to ensure Parliament includes new faces reflecting the nation's changing population.

With 288 of 305 local constituent seats decided, provisional results show the Justice and Development party (PJD) won 80, Independence party won 45, National Rally for Independents (RNI) won 38, Authenticity and Modernity Party (PAM) won 33, Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP) won 29, Popular Movement (MP) won 22, Constitutional Union (UC) won 15, and Progress and Socialism Party (PPS) won 11. Under the new Constitution, the head of government is to be appointed from the party with the most seats. Early results indicate a coalition government will emerge with PJD likely in the lead.

Despite some calls to boycott the election, provisional results show 45.4 percent of Morocco's 13.6 million registered voters participated, an increase of 21.6 percent over the previous parliamentary election in 2007. Almost 4,000 national and international observers oversaw the election.

The international community strongly commended Morocco's continuing reforms.

The "United States supports Morocco's efforts to promote ongoing democratic development through constitutional, judicial, and political reforms," said Andy Halus, Deputy Spokesperson, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, State Department. "The full implementation of the new Constitution," he said, is "a step toward the fulfillment of the aspirations and rights of all Moroccans."

"Along with reforms already being carried out and recent constitutional change, Friday's election reinforces Morocco's reputation as a leader" in the region, said Henry Bellingham, British Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign, & Commonwealth Affairs.

"France hopes that this election will be a further step in Morocco's march on the path drawn by the King of Morocco, who launched major and key reforms," said Bernard Valero, French Foreign Ministry spokesperson.

Peter Pham, director, Michael S. Ansari Africa Center, Atlantic Council in Washington, called the elections a "historic moment" marking the culmination of a long process of Moroccan democratic reforms. He added that Morocco "did not wait for the 'Arab Spring' to initiate the reform process."

"These elections are an important milestone for Morocco and the region," said Edward M. Gabriel, Former US Ambassador to Morocco and Chairman of the Moroccan American Center. "Building and sustaining a working democracy is an aspiring goal and challenge—for all nations. Morocco has a head start with its history of reforms and tolerance. Its new Parliament must now show it can exercise its power to improve the lives of Moroccans and meet their desire for change."

For Answers to FAQs about Morocco's Parliamentary Elections, go to:

<http://moroccoonthemove.wordpress.com/faq-moroccos-2011-parliamentary-elections/>

For updates, results, commentaries, and the latest news about Morocco's elections, go to MoroccoOnTheMove.com, and also follow us on Twitter - @MorocOnTheMove

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The Moroccan American Center for Policy (MACP) is a non-profit organization whose principal mission is to inform opinion makers, government officials, and interested publics in the United States about political and social developments in Morocco and the role being played by the Kingdom of Morocco in broader strategic developments in North Africa, the Mediterranean, and the Middle East. For more, please visit www.moroccoonthemove.com.

This material is distributed by the Moroccan American Center for Policy on behalf of the Government of Morocco. Additional information is available at the Department of Justice in Washington, DC.



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****MEDIA ADVISORY****

House to Hold Hearing on Boko Haram - Emerging Threat to the U.S. Homeland

Panelists expected to discuss increasing reports of links between Boko Haram & AQIM

Washington, DC (November 29, 2011) — On Wednesday, the House Committee on Homeland Security's Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence will hold a [hearing](#), "Boko Haram - Emerging Threat to the U.S. Homeland." The hearing will focus not just on the danger of Boko Haram but also on the [dangerous alliance](#) between Boko Haram and al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). The Moroccan American Center for Policy has submitted a letter for the hearing's record and it can be downloaded [here](#).

**The hearing will take place
on
Wednesday, November 30, 2011 at 10:00 am
in
311 Cannon House Office Building
Independence Avenue SE @ First Street SE
Washington, DC**

You can view the hearing live at:
<http://mfile.akamai.com/65736/live/reflector:38577.aspx?bkup=38651&prop=n>

**For more information about terrorism and security in the region, visit
<http://www.moroccoonthemove.com> and click on 'Security'**

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